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ABSTRACT

Survey data from 3,698 teachers in 600 schools in Maryland are used to explore the determinants of teachers' use of parent involvement strategies. Two questions are addressed: (1) How much do elementary school teachers organize their teaching practice to facilitate parent involvement in home learning activities? and (2) Which factors in the teachers' backgrounds, teaching responsibilities, characteristics of their students, characteristics of the parents they work with, and characteristics of school environment are important determinants of their parent involvement teaching strategies? Results suggest that grade level, student racial composition, parental activity at school, teacher graduate training, and school district policies have strong independent effects on teachers' practices of parent involvement. In contrast, parent educational level, although an important influence on teachers' attitudes about parent involvement, is not a strong determinant of teachers' actual practices. Teachers who need parents' assistance or who choose to emphasize family-school cooperation have worked out ways to involve parents from all educational levels. (Authors)

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INFLUENCES ON TEACHERS' USE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT HOME

Henry Jay Becker and Joyce L. Epstein

The Johns Hopkins University

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Introductory Statement

The Center for Social Organization of Schools has two primary objectives: to develop a scientific knowledge of how schools affect their students, and to use this knowledge to develop better school practices and organization.

The Center works through five programs to achieve its objectives. The Studies in School Desegregation program applies the basic theories of social organization of schools to study the internal conditions of desegregated schools, the feasibility of alternative desegregation policies, and the interrelations of school desegregation with other equity issues such as housing and job desegregation. The School Organization program is currently concerned with authority-control structures, task structures, reward systems, and peer group processes in schools. It has produced a large-scale study of the effects of open schools, has developed Student Team Learning Instructional processes for teaching various subjects in elementary and secondary schools, and has produced a computerized system for school-wide attendance montioring. The School Process and Career Development program is studying transitions from high school to post secondary institutions and the role of schooling in the development of career plans and the actualization of labor market outcomes. The Studies in Delinquency and School Environments program is examining the interaction of school environments, school experiences, and individual characteristics in relation to in-school and later-life delinquency.

The Center also supports a Fellowships in Education Research program that provides opportunities for talented young researchers to conduct and publish significant research, and to encourage the participation of women and minorities in research on education.

This report, prepared by the School Organization program, continues the program's examination of how teachers involve parents in their children's learning activities.

Abstract

Survey data from 3,698 teachers in 600 schools in Maryland are used to explore the determinants of teachers' use of parent involvement strategies. Two questions are addressed: (1) How much do elementary school teachers organize their teaching practice to facilitate parent involvement in home learning activities? (2) Which factors in the teachers' backgrounds, teaching responsibilities, characteristics of their students, characteristics of the parents they work with, and characteristics of school environment are important determinants of their parent involvement teaching strategies?

Results suggest that grade level, student racial composition, parental activity at school, teacher graduate training, and school district policies have strong independent effects on teachers' practices of parent involvement. In contrast, parent educational level, although an important influence on teacher attitudes about parent involvement, is not a strong determinant of teachers' actual practices. Teachers who need parents' assistance or who choose to emphasize family-school cooperation have worked out ways to involve parents from all educational levels.

An important goal of public education is to provide to all children opportunities to obtain valuable skills and intellectual resources which some children obtain because of the circumstances of their private lives. Were it not for the equalizing effects of formal schooling, adult success would depend--even more than it does--on the differential opportunities of each child's particular set of out-of-school experiences.

One aspect of individual experience that has a major impact on the development of academic competence is the intellectual content of the routines of family life. Through family experiences, the child perceives the activities that bring meaning and satisfaction to adults. The extent to which activities such as reading, writing and creative use of tools and materials are everyday events in their parents' lives probably affects how children fit these activities into their own lives, and may affect the rate and quality of their learning in school. Children's intellectual development also may be influenced by the extent to which their parents actively engage in direct tutorial activities--whether these learning episodes are related to assignments initiated by teachers or whether they arise from family experiences (Clausen, 1966; Leichter, 1974; Marjoribanks, 1979).

The degree to which a student is exposed to family activities that have beneficial impact on academic growth is usually not a direct response to the child's school or the child's teachers. Although there is much vocal support for "parent involvement" by school professionals, most teachers give much less attention to managing learning in the context of home life than they do to managing learning in the classroom environment

(Becker and Epstein, in press). This is not surprising because the average teacher has little training or experience in developing the materials, activities, and methods of communication and management needed to direct learning activities at home.

The importance of family behaviors on students' academic growth raises important questions about the design of school programs: Is it the responsibility of educators to direct energy towards the management of learning activities at home? Are the costs of professional staff time and effort and the difficulties of producing widespread and effective parent participation greater than the potential improvements in the quality or rate of the students' academic learning?

Proponents suggest that a parent-based strategy could result in more frequent and more productive involvement by parents in the learning activities of their children; that it could bring to families who otherwise might not have them, particular teaching skills and an overall sense of competency in dealing with their childrens' learning problems; that it could sensitize teachers to the academic and social goals of families; and, if truly effective, that it could narrow that portion of the gap in academic achievement due to the disparity in cultural advantages and disadvantages of different family environments (Hodges, 1978; Lightfoot, 1978; Olmsted, 1979; Rich and Jones, 1977; Smith, 1968).

Of course, if an intensive, systematic teaching strategy involving parents in learning activities with their child at home were already proven to be easily implemented and cost-effective, it would be in widespread use throughout the educational system. This is not the case, however.

will consider the effects of these techniques on teachers, parents, and students.

Data Collection

The 16 districts included in the Maryland survey encompass 81% of the elementary schools in the state. They include the state's only large urban school district, 5 of the 7 suburban metropolitan districts, 6 of the 9 rural districts in the eastern part of the state, and 4 of the 7 remaining districts.

Principals in all schools containing first, third, or fifth grades were asked to participate. The three grades include the early primary through late elementary years in order to see how teachers' practices with parents change with the age of the students. Principals and teachers were requested to participate by a letter of introduction signed by a school district official, generally the superintendent. Apart from one district which strictly limited the survey effort, 96% of the principals completed survey questionnaires. Principals in 600 schools provided the names of their first-, third-, and fifth-grade teachers and other teachers at their school who taught reading or math to students in these grades. Questionnaires were mailed to each teacher identified by the principal--4,459 in 15 districts, and an unknown number in the one district in which direct contact was limited. Two followup mailings and a postcard reminder resulted in a response rate of 73% of the teachers in the fifteen fully-participating school districts (and an estimated 35% in the district restricting access to teachers). Fifth-grade teachers in the fifteen districts responded at a rate somewhat below the others (68%) as did

There are many obstacles to the effective use of parent-involvement strategies. Most teachers lack training in introducing learning activities to adults or in managing programs of adult volunteers (Stallworth and Williams, 1981). Teachers must spend time and effort to develop and manage programs of parent activity at home. Parents may need training in how to teach, tutor or monitor particular subjects or may lack subject-matter knowledge. Parent tutoring activities could interfere with existing parent-child relations and cause additional stress at home. Finally, parents have competing demands on their time and may have conflicting preferences about how to allocate their discretionary time at home (Epstein and Becker, in press; Scott-Jones, 1980).

The success of parent-involvement teaching strategies may depend on the age of the child, the family situation, the teacher's strengths and teaching responsibilities and the subjects in the curriculum. Little is known about the factors that affect the use of these approaches by teachers. Research is needed on the conditions that encourage teachers to devise and use parent-involvement practices. Ultimately, research is needed on the effects of teachers' practices on the students and parents who are involved. As a step in this direction, a statewide survey was conducted of elementary school principals and teachers in 16 of the 24 school districts in Maryland in the Spring of 1980. Approximately 3,700 teachers and 600 principals provided a broad view of how teachers use parent-involvement practices as part of their teaching patterns. In this paper, we describe the variety of reported parent-involvement strategies and discuss factors related to variations in teachers' use of these techniques. Subsequent data collections and analyses

teachers in the large urban school district (58%). In half of the school districts more than 80% of the teachers returned completed questionnaires.

Survey Respondents

Table 1 describes the characteristics of the 3,698 teacher-respondents. About 28% of the survey respondents were first-grade teachers; 30%, third-grade; 29%, fifth-grade; and 13% were either reading or math specialists or others whom the principal indicated should be included in the study (e.g., parent-involvement coordinators).

About 90% of the sample of teachers were female; of the male teachers, about 70% taught grade 5. About 20% of the sample was black, and over 60% of the black teachers were in the urban, central city district. The teachers ranged in age from their early 20's to their 70's with most (38%) in their 30's, born between 1940 and 1949. About half of the teachers had taught for more than 10 years; of the rest, most had taught at least 5 years. Nearly half had earned graduate school degrees. Although most teachers taught a single class of children both reading and mathematics, team teaching and departmentalization of instruction were common. For example, among fifth-grade teachers, 75% reported some form of non-traditional teaching arrangement.

Reflecting the state's population, about one-half of the teachers were from public school systems in the suburban jurisdictions around Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. The teachers taught children of a representative mix of college-educated, high school-educated, and less-educated parents.

Table 1

Characteristics of Teachers in Survey
(N = 3698)

Grade Level	% of Respondents
Grade 1	28%
Grade 3	30
Grade 5	29
Reading, math, parent-involvement specialists, others named by principal	13
Sex	
Female	91%
Male	9
Race	
White	78%
Black	21
Other	1
Education	
Bachelor's	12%
BA plus credits	40
Master's	26
Master's plus credits	21
Experience	
1-5 years teaching	17%
6-10 years teaching	32
Over 10 years	51
Class Assignments	
Teach single class all day	55%
Teach several classes during day	45
Location of School District (and number of districts)	
Non-metropolitan and metropolitan fringe counties (12)	32%
Major suburban counties (3)	49
Central city (1)	19
Students' Parents' Education (teachers' estimates)	
Majority are not high school graduates	27%
Majority are high school, but not college, graduates	51
Majority are college graduates	22

Focus of the Survey

The questionnaire for teachers gathered information on teachers' emphases on parent involvement, particularly parent involvement in learning activities at home. Teachers were asked to report the frequency that they visited students' homes, organized workshops at school to present teaching ideas to groups of parents, had parent assistance in the classroom, and made use of fourteen distinct methods for involving parents at home in their child's education. In addition, teachers reported their beliefs about various aspects of parent involvement such as whether teachers can influence parents to participate more than they otherwise would, or whether parents have enough training and education to actually assist in teaching reading or math at home.

This paper emphasizes the relationships between active use of parent-involvement strategies and personal background and teaching environment variables. We address two basic questions: (1) How much do elementary school teachers organize their teaching practice to facilitate parent involvement in home learning activities? (2) Which factors in the teachers' backgrounds, teaching responsibilities, characteristics of their students, characteristics of the parents they work with, and the characteristics of school environment are important determinants of their parent involvement teaching strategies?

14 Techniques to Involve Parents at Home

Teachers were asked several questions about each of 14 specific "teaching techniques" that involve parents in learning activities at home with their children. First, they were asked about their use of each technique--whether they had used it frequently during the current school year, occasionally, or not at all (and, if not at all, whether

they had used it in the past). Then they were asked to decide whether the technique would work in their teaching situation or, if not, whether it was for lack of parent cooperation or because parents lack sufficient skills to carry out the task effectively. Finally, they were asked to pick the one parent-involvement technique, if any (either from the list of 14 or one of their own choosing), that they were most satisfied with during the current school year.

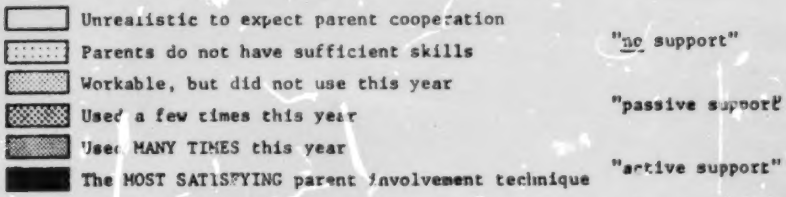
Answers to these items were combined into a six-point "index of support" for each technique: no parent cooperation; insufficient parent skill; workable but not used; occasional use; frequent use; and "most satisfactory" technique. Figure 1 summarizes the distribution of scores on the index of support for each of the 14 techniques.

Factor analysis of the 14 indices showed a clustering of responses around five different approaches to parent involvement at home: (a) an emphasis on involving parents in the child's reading instruction; (b) an emphasis on encouraging or structuring oral discussions between parent and child; (c) a focus on informal instructive activities for parents to conduct; (d) the use of formal contracts between parent and teacher that specify particular roles or responsibilities for parents; and (e) an emphasis on developing parents' tutoring, observational, or evaluational skills.[1] Of course, any teacher might use more than one approach, or might reject many or all of the techniques.

Of the five approaches, the most popular one involved parents in reading instruction. "Asking parent to read to the child regularly or

[1]Thirteen of the 14 techniques had maximum factor loadings in the clusters to which they had been assigned according to their manifest content. The other technique--"asking children questions about their school day"--had approximately equal factor loadings on two factors--"parent-child discussions" (where it was assigned) and "activities emphasizing reading."

Figure 1 : Fourteen Techniques for Involving Parents in Teaching Activities at Home -- Evaluations by Maryland Teachers


Evaluation Categories:
Unrealistic to expect parent cooperation
Parents do not have sufficient skills
Workable, but did not use this year
Used a few times this year
Used MANY TIMES this year
The MOST SATISFYING parent involvement technique
"no support"
"passive support"
"active support"

ACTIVITIES EMPHASIZING READING

Ask parents to read to their child regularly or to listen to the child read aloud.

Loan books, workbooks, etc. to a parent to keep at home for short periods as extra learning material.

Ask parents to take their child to the library.

LEARNING THROUGH DISCUSSION

Ask parents to get their child to talk about what he/she did that day in your classroom.

Give an assignment that requires the children to ask their parents questions - for example, that children write about their parent's experiences.

Ask parents (one or more) to watch a specific television program with their child and to discuss the show afterwards.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Suggest ways for parents to incorporate their child into their own activities at home that would be educationally enriching.

Send home suggestions for game or group activities related to the child's schoolwork that can be played by parent and child.

Suggest how parents might use the home environment (materials and activities of daily life) to stimulate their child's interest in reading, math, etc.

CONTRACTS BETWEEN TEACHER AND PARENT

Establish a formal agreement where the parent supervises and assists the child in completing homework tasks.

Establish a formal agreement where the child provides rewards and/or penalties based on the child's school performance or behavior.

DEVELOPING TEACHING AND EVALUATION SKILLS IN PARENTS

Ask parents to come to observe the classroom (not to "help") for part of a day.

Explain to parents certain techniques for teaching, for making learning materials, or for planning lessons.

Give a questionnaire to parents so they can evaluate their child's progress, or provide some other "feedback" to you.

to listen to the child read aloud" was the only technique used frequently by a majority of teachers.

In contrast, few teachers reported extensive use of techniques that focused on learning through conversation, even though talk is more plentiful than reading in most families. For example, only two percent of the teachers made a practice of asking parents to watch and discuss particular television programs with their child. Yet techniques such as using television-focused discussion received a great deal of what might be called "passive support." Most teachers said that this was a way of involving parents that could work in their teaching practice, even though they had not used it very often.

A different approach to parent involvement was the teacher's direction of informal family activities in an instructionally effective way. About 30% of the teachers favored this emphasis, and another 30% felt it could not be successful. The informal techniques included, for example, suggesting ways for parents to incorporate their child into the parents' activities at home and sending home games with an instructional content for the family to play together. Teachers with more teaching experience reported using these techniques more frequently than did less-experienced teachers.

Teachers expressed less consensus about the benefits of using formal contracts with parents than about any of the other parent-involvement techniques. About 40% of the teachers felt that these techniques were not worth pursuing because they would not increase learning or because of insufficient parental cooperation or skills. On the other hand, 20% of the teachers felt that contracts for parental supervision of homework and projects were valuable enough to use "many times" during the year or were the most satisfactory parent-involvement technique in their practice.

The least frequently used cluster of techniques were those to develop teaching skills in parents. Many teachers took a step in this direction by having parents observe their classrooms, but more intensive activities such as conducting workshops for parents at the school were rarely used. Teachers in the large urban school district were more likely than others to approach parent involvement from this perspective.

Emphasis on Parent Involvement

If teachers are to produce effective parent involvement at home, they must develop means for exerting leadership with parents--communicating to parents what needs to be accomplished at home; motivating parents to cooperate with the teacher's intentions or to cooperatively design programs of home learning; convincing parents of the value of parent-led learning activities; and, where appropriate skills are lacking, developing parents' capabilities for effective home teaching.

The survey suggests, however, that most teachers do not reinforce their appeals for parent involvement at home. Although almost all teachers have some personal and telephone contacts with most parents of their students, few appear to devote any systematic effort to making sure that parent involvement at home accomplishes particular learning goals. Regardless of which technique they prefer, only 9% of the teachers "require" parental cooperation; the rest "suggest" the technique. This means that the teachers have limited control over the technique and the parents' responses.

Only one teacher in five reported making any visits to students' homes during the year, and only two percent made visits to more than a handful of homes. About 30% of the teachers reported conducting group meetings with parents apart from school-wide parent nights, but only

seven percent held at least three parent workshops or group meetings during the year. Even these percentages may be high if the teachers broadly interpreted the survey questions.

Teachers report having the most contact with parents of children with learning and discipline problems and with parents who are already active in the school. For example, one-third as many contacts with parents are reported for "average" students as for students with problems. Most teachers report that they use their most satisfactory parent-involvement techniques with only some--not all--parents.

One important way for teachers to have contact with parents is by having them assist in various ways in the classroom. About 40% of the teachers report having parental assistance in the classroom at least several days each month. But classroom volunteering in most cases is limited to a few parents who make repeated contributions. Another form of parent teacher contact occurs in informal social activities and community groups. More than one-fourth of the teachers report having some social contact with some parents outside of the school context. But social contacts, like classroom participation by parents, home visits by teachers, and parent workshops, involve only a small number of the parents.

Systematic communication with--and motivation and training of--whole classrooms of parents to increase the extent of parent involvement in learning activities at home is clearly not achieved by the majority of teachers. Most teachers say they believe that parent involvement in learning activities at home is important. Yet, because of the difficulties of accomplishing it in an educationally valuable way, most teachers do not make parent involvement at home a major focus of their teaching practice.

Differences Among Teachers

"Committed" Teachers and Support for Different Techniques

In our sample of nearly 3,700 teachers, some developed ways to incorporate parent involvement at home as a central aspect of their teaching strategy. One first-grade teacher in a suburban school system, for example, reports making several home visits, conducting at least one workshop, having classroom assistance from parents on most days, being involved with parents in community activities, and using 13 of the 14 techniques at least occasionally with particular emphasis on developing games for the family to play to reinforce reading, language, and arithmetic lessons. She frequently assigns informal learning activities at home and reports nearly 100% cooperation from parents.

Teachers who are unusual in the degree to which they involve parents in activities at home may not have typical teaching assignments. Also, they may select different activities for parents than do teachers who make more modest attempts to involve parents. This section discusses ways that teachers who are more committed to parent involvement differ from other teachers.

Table 2 lists the differences between more committed teachers and groups of teachers who report contrasting behaviors and attitudes about parent involvement. Each column features one of the five parent-involvement approaches, and indicates the percent of active use of the approach. Ratios show the degree to which support by the committed teachers exceeds that of the contrasting group. We use the term "committed" to refer to teachers who make home visits, hold parent workshops, have community contacts with parents, have classroom assistance from parents or hold strongly positive opinions about three aspects of parent involvement.

The table shows that for each of the behaviors and attitudes, the committed teachers were more likely to report active use of all five approaches toward parent involvement. However, committed and contrasting teachers differed in their active support for some parent involvement approaches more than they differed for others.

Teachers who made several home visits showed stronger support for techniques aimed at developing parents' skills--particularly for training parents in teaching techniques and observing in the classroom. They also showed disproportionate support for discussing television programs as a family activity and for other techniques that emphasized oral exchanges between parent and child. It may be that exposure to even a slice of family life in its own context sensitizes teachers to the usefulness of verbal give-and-take. Teachers' visits to the home may make parents more comfortable in visits to the classroom and may show teachers that parents are receptive to teachers' initiatives.

The few teachers who hold several workshops for parents tend to actively support most parent-involvement techniques. Developing parents' teaching skills and promoting informal home-learning activities are the approaches that most sharply distinguish their practice from that of contrasting teachers. There were large differences in support for all six techniques included in these two approaches.

Involvement of teachers and parents in common social and cultural activities in the community produces a preference for less formal techniques of parent involvement such as those that emphasize discussion. These teachers use television as a learning tool, have the children interview their parents, and use the materials of the home environment for academic learning more than teachers who have no involvement in community activities with parents.

Table 2: Differences in the Likelihood of Active Support for Parent-Involvement Techniques between "Committed" and "Contrasting" Groups of Teachers

Behavior or Attitude Item	Parent-Involvement Approaches: Activities Emphasizing Reading	Learning Through Discussion	Informal Learning Activities	Parent Teacher Contracts	Developing Parents' Skills
"Committed" group / "Contrasting" group / Ratio of active support	Percent Actively Supporting These Techniques[1/]				
Visited students' homes since Sept.					
The 6% who visited 3 or more students	(82%)	(57%)	(56%)	(35%)	(51%)
The 76% who visited no students	(76%)	(38%)	(44%)	(26%)	(28%)
Ratio	1.09	1.49	1.25	1.35	1.85
Held workshops or group meetings with parents					
The 7% who held 3 or more workshops	(84%)	(57%)	(72%)	(34%)	(57%)
The 68% who held no workshops	(75%)	(37%)	(40%)	(25%)	(25%)
Ratio	1.13	1.56	1.77	1.34	2.33
Involved in community activities with parents					
The 14% involved with 6 or more parents	(80%)	(52%)	(55%)	(32%)	(35%)
The 53% involved with no parents	(75%)	(36%)	(42%)	(25%)	(27%)
Ratio	1.07	1.42	1.33	1.25	1.30
Have parents assist in the classroom					
The 40% who have parent help at least a few days a month	(84%)	(45%)	(56%)	(32%)	(36%)
The 60% who rarely or never have parent help	(72%)	(38%)	(39%)	(24%)	(25%)
Ratio	1.17	1.20	1.44	1.34	1.44
"Teachers can only provide parents with ideas, they cannot influence parents to use them"					
The 17% who Disagreed	(83%)	(51%)	(61%)	(32%)	(43%)
The 56% who Agreed or Tended to Agree	(74%)	(39%)	(40%)	(25%)	(27%)
Ratio	1.12	1.31	1.52	1.28	1.59
"Most parents don't have enough training to teach child reading or math"					
The 13% who Disagreed	(83%)	(46%)	(55%)	(33%)	(34%)
The 46% who Agreed or Tended to Agree	(75%)	(40%)	(42%)	(25%)	(29%)
Ratio	1.11	1.16	1.33	1.29	1.18
"Parents devote a great deal of time to their families and often make sacrifices for their children"					
The 13% who Agreed	(79%)	(46%)	(58%)	(35%)	(36%)
The 58% who Disagreed or Tended to Disagree	(75%)	(39%)	(41%)	(24%)	(28%)
Ratio	1.06	1.20	1.39	1.49	1.27

[1/] Active support of the approach is measured by the teachers' reports of frequent use or most satisfying use of at least one of the techniques in the approach cluster.

There were substantial differences between the 40% of teachers who made some use of parent volunteers in their classroom and the remaining 60%. The largest differences were in the extent of support for training parents, and in the use of informal techniques like playing family games and using common materials to increase academic skills.

A similar concentration on informal family activities and on direct instruction of parents in teaching methods was apparent on the part of the teachers who expressed strong, favorable opinions about their ability to influence parents to participate, about the parents' ability to be effective teachers of their children, or about the efforts and sacrifices that parents make for their children. In addition, teachers with favorable opinions of parents--particularly in the efforts and sacrifices they make for their children--were more supportive of using formal contracts than were contrasting teachers. Of course, contracts do require parents to make sacrifices, and those teachers who frequently use this method must be impressed by the parents' willingness to give up some of their free time at home to formally supervise the children's school activities.

In summary, the committed teachers are more comfortable than other teachers with approaches that emphasize parent involvement at home in informal, educational activities and with approaches that encourage the development of parental teaching or tutoring skills. In contrast, so many teachers use some reading activities with parents that an emphasis on reading did not distinguish dramatically the committed teachers from the contrasting teachers.

Determinants of Parent-Involvement Strategies

Many factors might influence the extent to which teachers use parent-involvement strategies as well as their attitudes about the effectiveness of these methods. Among the factors that are likely to

be important are the grade levels and abilities of the students they teach, the characteristics of their students' parents, their own background and training, and the support given these techniques by the teachers' colleagues, supervisors, and school systems.

Figures 2 and 3 present selected bivariate relationships between the use of parent-involvement techniques and two of its most widely presumed determinants--grade level taught and parents' education. Figure 2 graphs the proportion of teachers at each grade level who report actively using particular parent-involvement techniques. Results are shown for seven techniques, covering each of the five general approaches to parent involvement discussed in the survey.

For most of the 14 parent-involvement techniques in our survey, teachers of younger students are more likely to use the technique. Parent-and-child reading activities have the most pronounced decline with increasing grade level. The use of three informal learning activities included in the questionnaire also declines with increasing grade level, as do efforts to teach parents techniques for teaching their children. On the other hand, the use of contracts, the limited use of television-based family discussions, and the use of assignments that require children to ask their parents questions and the use of evaluation forms by parents (not shown) are as often used with older children as with younger.

Figure 3 illustrates the differences in patterns of teachers' support for several of the techniques with parents of different educational levels. For each technique, bar graphs are shown for three groups of teachers--those whose students' parents were mainly college graduates; those whose students' parents were mainly high school graduates, and those whose students' parents nearly all lacked high school diplomas. Each bar graph shows the proportion of teachers who make active use of

Figure 2: Active Use of Parent Involvement Techniques by Grade Level

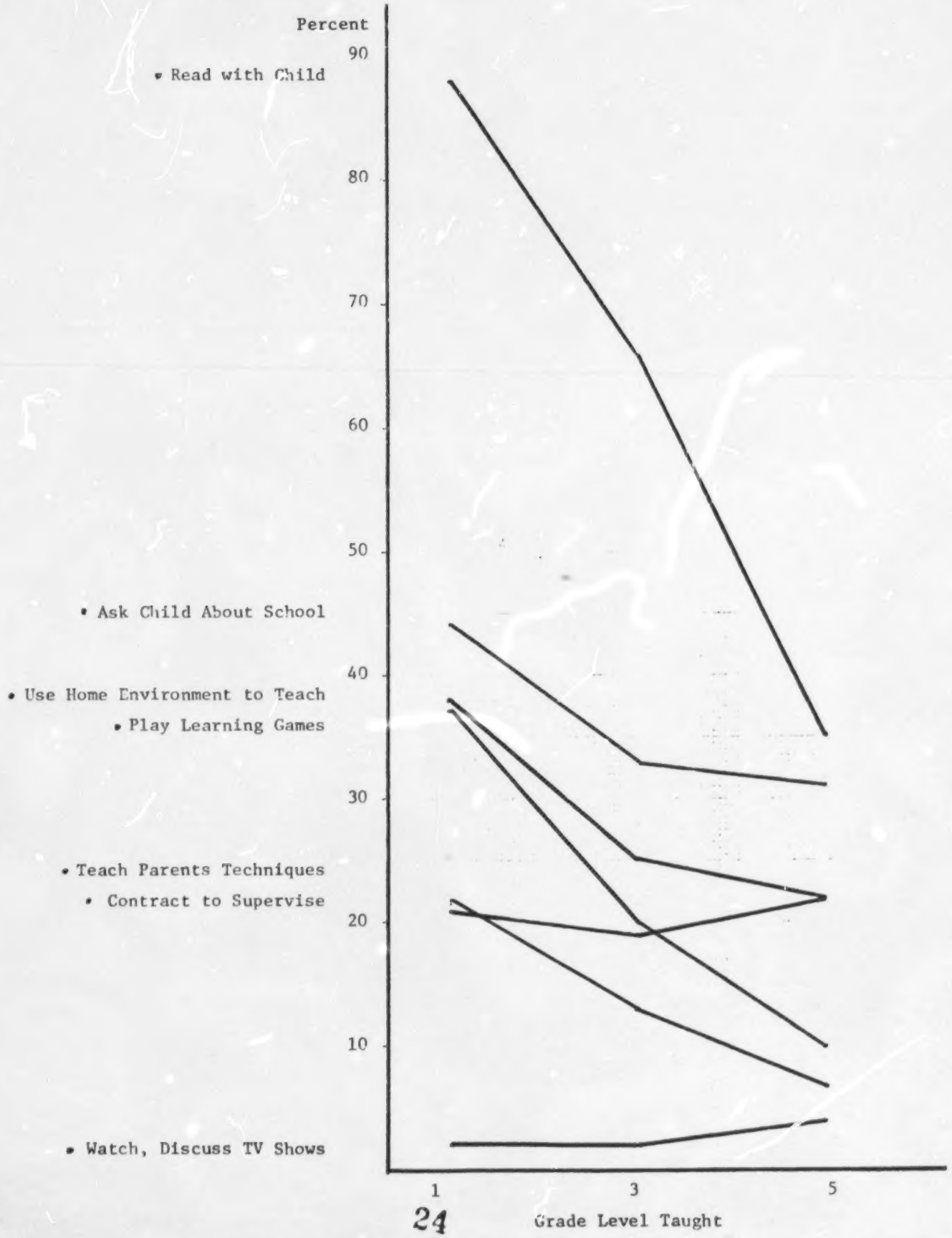
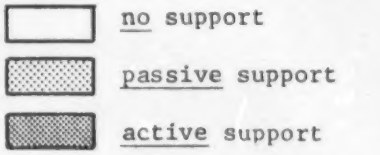
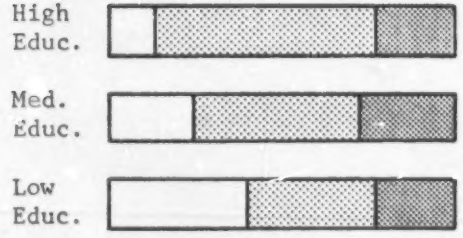


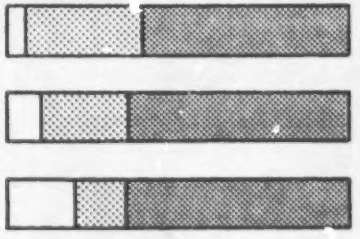
Figure 3: Levels of Support for Some Techniques by Estimated Education of Parents



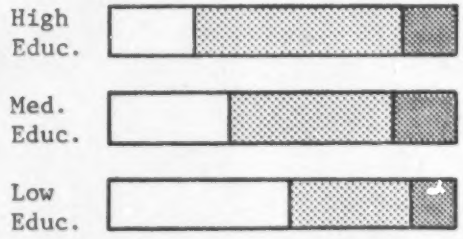
PLAY
Send home suggestions for game or group activities related to the child's schoolwork that can be played by parent and child.



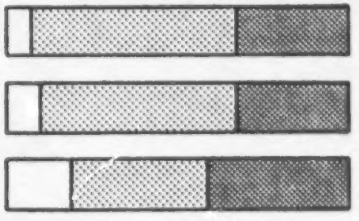
READ
Ask parents to read to their child regularly or to listen to the child read aloud.



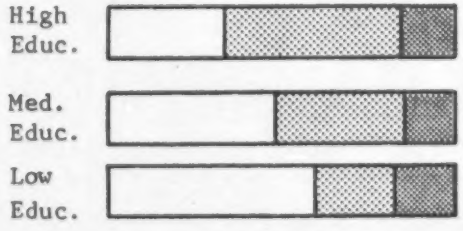
CONTRACT
Establish a formal agreement where the parent provides rewards and/or penalties based on the child's school performance or behavior.



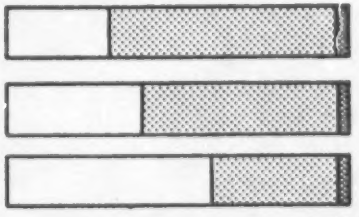
DISCUSS
Ask parents to get their child to talk about what he/she did that day in your classroom.



INSTRUCT
Explain to parents certain techniques for teaching, for making learning materials, or for planning lessons.



EVALUATE
Give a questionnaire to parents so they can evaluate their child's progress, or provide some other feedback to you.



the technique, the proportion who believe it probably would be effective but are not frequent users, and the proportion who do not feel that their students' parents could or would participate effectively.

For example, parent-involvement reading techniques are used by a majority of teachers with students from all educational backgrounds (see upper-right panel of Figure 3). At every level of parent education, about 60% of the teachers make active use of this technique. Of the remaining teachers, those whose students' parents had little education are more apt to believe that the techniques could not work in their teaching situation because the parents would not cooperate or do not have the skills to be effective, whereas those teachers whose students' parents had more education claim the technique could work but that it is not currently part of their teaching practice.

The pattern for each of the techniques in Figure 3 (and for the others not included) is very much the same. For each technique, teachers who deal with college-educated parents, those who work with parents with average schooling, and those whose students' parents have very little schooling are about equally likely to be active users of the parent involvement strategy. However, teachers who are not active users respond differently to questions about its likely success according to the educational levels of their students' parents. Teachers who are not active users and who teach children with better-educated parents report that the parent-involvement technique would work but that they do not choose to use it. Teachers who are not active users and who teach children with less-educated parents are more apt to report that the parents would not be able or willing to carry out the activities successfully.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The previous figures show that grade level taught and educational level of the students' parents are both associated systematically with the parent-involvement practices of teachers. These associations, however, may be due to other characteristics of the schools, teachers or families. In order to identify the determinants of teachers' orientations towards parent-involvement practices, multiple regression procedures were employed.

Dependent Variables

Four aspects of teachers' behavior were examined as outcomes: the total number of frequently used parent-involvement techniques (i.e., the breadth of behavioral involvement); the number of visits made to students' homes: the number of parent workshops held; and the frequency of having parent volunteer assistance in the classroom. One index of attitudes towards parent involvement was constructed by combining responses to three agree-disagree items--"teachers can/cannot influence parents," "parents do/do not make sacrifices for their children," and "parents can/cannot teach reading or math." To these three responses was added the sum of the number of techniques which the teacher believed would be successful if used in her own teaching practice. The four behavioral variables initially had been combined into an index, but their low intercorrelations and different relationships to predictor variables suggested that teachers use the techniques selectively, so separate analyses were more appropriate. Table 3 presents the zero-order correlations of the behavioral and attitudinal dependent variables.

Statistical procedures must be used cautiously with these measures. The questionnaire went to some lengths to assure response-objectivity

by telling the teachers that they were not expected to use all or ary of the parent-involvement techniques. The teachers were told that "different teachers use different strategies and programs to help children learn" and "It may be that only a few teachers use these techniques, and no one is sure how successful they are." However, because the measures are from self-reports, there is likely to be some overreporting of parent-involvement behavior, as well as different interpretations of response categories (e.g., "many times"). Although some overreporting may exist, it is likely that such bias is similar across the groups of teachers selected for comparison. Only differential bias would invalidate comparisons between groups and claims about the relative influence of various factors on teachers' behaviors. Nevertheless, because some results may be affected by respondents' reporting behavior, the findings must be considered tentative.

Independent Variables

Five sets of independent variables are included in the model.

Teaching Responsibilities. Four aspects of teachers' formal instructional responsibilities were treated as explanatory variables: the grade level of the majority of the teacher's students; whether the teacher was a specialist with responsibility for reading instruction only or taught math to students as well; whether the teacher taught a single classroom of students each day or taught different classes at different times of the day; and the total number of children to whom the teacher gave instruction during the week.

Student Characteristics. Four measures of student characteristics were included in the model: the proportion of students reported by the

Table 3: Correlations of the Behavior Measures and Attitude Index. (N = 3,698 Teachers)

Parent Involvement Behaviors

Measures	Intercorrelations among Measures				
	Home Visits	Work-Shops	Volun-teers	# of Techn.	Attitude Index
Home visits	--	.14	.08	.17	.07
Parent Workshops		--	.12	.32	.12
Frequency of parent volunteers			--	.13	.24
Number of frequently-used parent involvement techniques (0-15)				--	.10

Parent Involvement Attitudes

Index Component	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Attitude Index
Teachers can/cannot influence parents	2-8	4.6	2.1	.51
Parents do/do not sacrifice for their children	2-8	4.5	2.1	.61
Parents can/cannot teach reading/math	2-8	4.9	1.8	.53
Number of parent techniques that would probably work in their teaching	0-15	9.7	3.8	.83

teacher to be "performing outstandingly"; the proportion of students "with learning problems"; the proportion "with disciplinary problems"; and the principal's report of the percentage of black or other minority students in the school.

Parent Characteristics. Three measures of school and classroom SES context were included: the teacher's estimate of the percentage of parents who were college graduates; the teacher's estimate of the percentage of parents who were high school graduates; and the principal's report of whether or not the school receives Title I funds. Another characteristic of the parent population used in the analysis was a single-item measure of the percent of teacher's students whose "parents are active in school."

Teacher Characteristics. Four personal characteristics of the teachers were included in the regressions: whether or not the teacher was in the first or second year of teaching; the amount of graduate school education the teacher had (degrees and credits, on a seven-point scale); and the teacher's sex and race.

Professional Climate. Two within-school indicators of professional climate and one measure of district-level emphasis on parent involvement were included in the analysis. The principal was asked to categorize his or her own support for seven of the fourteen parent-involvement techniques. The judgments, on a four point scale from "discouraging the use of the technique" to "encouraging many teachers to adopt the method," were summed for a within-school measure of the principal's support of teachers' parent-involvement initiatives. Also, questionnaire responses from other teachers in the school about their own parent-involvement practices and attitudes were combined to produce another within-school indicator of professional climate. Finally, the school district in which the teacher taught was

coded in a series of dummy variables for the regression analyses. Districts that were outstanding on each aspect of parent involvement were identified. The overall "effect" of school district influence on teacher behavior and attitude was estimated by determining how much the district variables added to the percent of variance explained, independently of the other predictors.

Results

Standardized regression coefficients from analyses of effects of the five sets of independent variables on each of the behavior and attitudes measures are reported in Table 4.

Teaching Responsibilities. Overall, the most important influence on teachers' use of parent-involvement techniques is the grade level taught. The lower the grade level, the more teachers use procedures and programs that involve parents in learning activities at home with their child. Teachers of younger children report more frequent involvement of parents in the classroom. Grade level is also a significant determinant of teachers' attitudes about parent involvement, but it has a smaller effect on attitudes than on teachers' reported behavior. This suggests that teachers of older students may want to practice parent-involvement strategies as much as teachers of younger students, but have not yet found the methods to do so successfully.

Grade level is less important than some other variables in determining the extent to which teachers visit students' homes or conduct frequent workshops. Workshops are usually conducted by specialists--reading teachers and others whose responsibilities extend to larger numbers of students from all grade levels and to different students during different portions of a school day.

Teaching a larger number of students encourages teachers to turn to

Table 4: Influences on Teachers' Parent-Involvement Behavior and Attitudes

	Number of Often-Used Techniques	Number of Parent Workshops	Number of Home Visits	Frequency of Parent Classroom Volunteers	Attitude Index
Teaching responsibilities	Standardized Regression Coefficients (b)				
Students' Grade Level (Modal Grade)	-.25*	-.07*	--[1]	-.26*	-.07
Reading Only[2]	+.04	+.08*	--	--	.04
Different Classes, Different Times	--	+.11*	+.05	--	--
Total Number of Students Taught	+.04	+.06*	--	+.09*	--
Student Characteristics					
% Performing Outstandingly	X[3]	X	X	X	X
% with Learning Problems	--	+.06*	-.04	--	X
% with Disciplinary Problems	--	X	X	--	-.12*
% Minority (School Level)	+.07*	--	+.05	-.09*	-.05*
Parent Characteristics					
% Active at School	+.11*	+.18*	+.15*	+.17*	+.15*
% Graduated College	X	X	X	+.08*	+.17*
% Graduated High School	-.04*	X	X	X	+.22*
A Title I School	X	+.10*	-.04	X	-.09*
Teacher Characteristics					
In First or Second Yr. of Teaching	-.06*	--	--	--	--
Graduate Degrees and Credits	+.09*	+.07*	+.04	--	+.07*
Black or Other Minority	+.07*	+.03		--	+.06*
Female	--	--	--	+.06*	+.05*
Professional Climate					
Principal Support for Parent Involvement	--	+.09*	+.03	--	--
Par. Inv. among Other Teachers	--	+.03	+.02	+.02	+.04*
School District Dummy Variables[4]	U=.14	U=.11	U=.12	U=.15	U=.10
Outstanding Districts[5]	Urban C3: +.16*	Urban C3: +.08*	Rural C15: +.07*	Suburban C4: +.11*	Urban C3: +.10*
Squared Multiple Correlation (R^2)	.17	.10	.05	.19	.24

Notes:

1. In the body of table, "--" refers to regression coefficients that are not statistically significant; "*" indicates coefficients where $p < .01$.
2. More precisely, variable is "does not teach math to students in modal grade." Although some may not teach reading either, most are reading specialists.
3. X refers to variables not included in equation for that dependent variable. Variables were excluded when, because of mutual substantive and statistical correlation with another variable, inclusion of both would have distorted individual regression coefficients. Selection of the variable to be included was based on relative sizes of "regression coefficient to enter" with other variables already in the equation.
4. U = square root of additional variance added by these 15 dichotomous variables. The statistic is comparable in magnitude to a regression coefficient for a single variable.
5. The values shown are "regression coefficients to enter" prior to adding the 15 school district dummy variables. The districts whose valued are shown are those with the largest regression coefficients. They are numbered (C1-C24) for identification only.

parents for assistance. Having a larger student load has a stronger effect on efforts to obtain frequent help from parent volunteers in the classroom (b = .09) than it does on using any other parent-involvement techniques. Finally, reading teachers and other specialists appear to have somewhat stronger parent-involvement programs than other teachers. Small, positive independent effects of specialization are reported for the variety of techniques used and attitudes toward parent involvement.

Student Characteristics. Some characteristics of the student population have modest but statistically independent, significant effects on teachers' parent-involvement practices. Student racial composition may be as important as classroom academic and social performance in influencing teachers to use home-learning techniques and to use parents as classroom assistants. In particular, teachers in schools with more black students report using more techniques with parents at home than do teachers in predominantly white schools--controlling on other student characteristics, parent SES, and the other explanatory variables (b = .07). Racial composition makes a difference in the opposite direction for teacher use of parent volunteers in the classroom. Teachers report more frequent use of parent volunteers in schools with higher proportions of white students (b= -.09). Overall, teacher attitudes about parent involvement are slightly more positive in schools with more white students (b= -.05), with all other factors accounted for.

Classroom school performance is related to teachers' parent-involvement practices. Because the three different measures of students' performance are so highly correlated (all are teacher estimates of the number of students at the top and bottom extremes of performance and behavior), reduced-form regression models were employed with the weaker variables and those whose signs were reversed removed from the equation. Inclusion

of all three variables in the same regression model distorts the contribution of any one measure and destroys the meaning of a performance effect (Gordon, 1968). The analyses using the appropriate models suggest that most effects of student performance variables on measures of teacher parent-involvement behavior are rather weak. It may be that more reliable performance measures--such as standardized test scores or report card grades--would produce significant relationships. But these data suggest that teachers use parent-involvement strategies with students at all levels of performance and behavior about equally.

In contrast, teacher attitudes towards parent involvement are significantly affected by the number of children they teach who are behavior problems in their classrooms. A comparison of different regression models shows that poor discipline and not poor academic performance of students is responsible for less favorable teacher attitudes towards parent involvement. When "percent with learning problems" is substituted for "percent with disciplinary problems" the regression coefficient drops from b= -.12 to b = -.05 (not shown in table).

Parent Characteristics. Both of the parent characteristics measured have important effects on teacher parent-involvement practices and attitudes. The strongest effect of family SES[1] is on teachers' attitudes about the likely success of parent involvement. The strongest effect of parent participation at school is on teachers' practices of involving parents.

Teachers whose students' parents are better-educated use slightly fewer home techniques, but make greater use of parent volunteers in the classroom. On the whole, however, the relationship between the educational characteristics of the parent population and teachers' parent-

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[1]This set of variables includes three highly intercorrelated measures--two estimates of parents' education and school Title I status. Reduced form regression models were again used, with the weaker variables and those whose signs were reversed removed from the equation.

involvement practices are rather modest. In contrast, regression results confirm that family characteristics are very important in determining teacher attitudes about parent involvement. More than one-third of the total variance explained by the regression model for the attitude index is uniquely attributable to parent education and the economic status of the school (9.1%). Another 8.6% is jointly attributable to these and other predictors, making a total of 17.7% or nearly three-quarters of the explained variance in teacher attitudes accounted for by the measures of socioeconomic status.

Parental behavior, not parental SES, is a strong influence on teachers practices of parent involvement. Teachers' practices are strongly affected by the extent of participation in in-school activities by parents. The independent effects of SES and extent of parent in-school activities are difficult to disentangle because widespread participation in the school is primarily a middle-class phenomenon. Parents are more active in classrooms where many parents have college education ($r = .26$), where there are more high-achieving students ($r = .36$), and where there are fewer minority pupils in the school ($r = -.20$). Parent activity in the school is particularly low in the large urban district included in the survey and is highest in the highest-income suburban district.

When all other potential explanatory variables--including SES--are statistically controlled in Table 4, parent participation in the school consistently explains teachers' parent-involvement activities for home learning and teachers' attitudes about parent involvement. All effects (b) of parent participation on teacher behaviors and attitudes exceed .10. For two outcomes--workshops and home visits--parents' participation in school

activities is the strongest influence of all predictors in the model. For three outcomes--use of techniques, workshops and visits--its standardized regression coefficient, controlling on the other 25 variables in the model, is even stronger than the corresponding zero-order correlation.

Thus, widespread parent participation is an important factor in influencing teachers' parent-involvement practices. Perhaps such participation is a catalyst for more efforts by teachers to involve all parents in learning activities at home. Parents who are active at school--whether as classroom aides to different teachers, as operators of understaffed facilities, or as organizers of P.T.A. assemblies or school fund-raisers --are showing their interest in and commitment to the schooling enterprise. Teachers may find these parents easy to approach because of their presence in and commitment to the school and classroom. If some parents are approachable, it may be easier for teachers to ask all parents to participate in learning activities at home.

Teacher Characteristics

Among the nearly 3,700 teachers who responded to the survey, about one-third added comments and elaborations to their questionnaire responses. These remarks ranged from descriptions of specific mechanisms used to obtain parental participation to broad statements of support or distain for teacher-organized programs for parent involvement at home (Epstein and Becker, in press). The diverse comments suggest that variations in teachers' personal backgrounds, professional training, and types of teaching experiences may greatly affect their parent-involvement attitudes and practices. The survey permitted the examination of a few of these personal factors.

Years of teaching experience, surprisingly, was negligibly related

to parent-involvement behavior and attitudes. Only one important effect of teachers' professional experience appeared: teachers in their first or second year of teaching used fewer techniques for parent involvement at home than other teachers. Their use of workshops, home visits, and classroom volunteers, and their attitudes about parent involvement were not significantly different than those of more experienced teachers. No other systematic differences were found even when teachers were grouped into five categories of experience.

Teachers' post-baccalaureate educational training, however, was related to various aspects of the way they practice parent involvement. With all other variables accounted for, teachers with graduate degrees and credits use more home techniques, are more likely to hold workshops for parents, and are more likely to make home visits than teachers without advanced education. They also have, on the average, more favorable attitudes towards parent involvement. Although formal schooling is often considered less effective than real experience in influencing teachers' behaviors, in this instance more education may be an indicator of teachers' motivations to use new techniques, including parent involvement.

Only two personal attributes of the teachers were recorded in the survey questionnaire--race and sex. Black teachers report more frequent use of a wider range of parent home techniques than do white teachers. Women report more frequent use of parent classroom volunteers. Both blacks and women have more favorable attitudes towards parent involvement. The race and sex effects are independent of all other variables in the model.

Professional Climate

Although they have a good deal of freedom in their choice of methods of instruction, teachers are subject to the influences of other professionals

in their environment. Colleagues serve as sources of ideas and social pressure, and reinforce each others' beliefs about the people--including parents--who make up the school social system. Principals serve in a similar role, and, because of their formal authority, may influence the particular techniques that teachers develop and use. Another source of influence on teachers may be the policies applied in all schools in a district by a school system's top leadership. These variables were measured in the survey and added to the regression model as indicators of the professional climate.

The two measures of school-specific professional climate have relatively little independent impact on teachers' practices and attitudes about parent involvement. The development of parent-training workshops by teachers is influenced by the leadership or support of their principals. However, there are no other significant effects of principal's support for parent involvement practices. The influence of other teachers' parent involvement practices is not statistically significant except for a weak effect of colleagues' practices on teachers' attitudes.

In contrast to the unimpressive effects of these within-school climate measures, the 15 dichotomous variables representing individual school districts taken together do explain a significant proportion of variance of all five dependent variables. For the five outcomes, most of the 15 partial regression coefficients were very close to zero, suggesting that most districts' policies have little impact (or equal impact) on individual teacher's behaviors and attitudes about parent involvement. However, several partial regression coefficients were quite large and in a positive direction, suggesting that several districts have policies that emphasize some aspect of parent involvement. The strongest of these relationships are identified at the bottom of Table 4.

For three of the five measures, the distinctive influential district

was the single, large, urban district in the survey. The teachers in this urban district stood out from the others--net of student, parent, and school organizational factors--in their reported use of parent-involvement techniques, workshops for parents, and in their overall favorable attitude towards parent involvement. The district that stood out in terms of its teachers' use of parent classroom volunteers was a large, suburban, middle-income district. Finally a small, rural district in the eastern part of the state was distinctive in its teachers' use of home visits, all other factors held constant. We have not studied school district policies across the state in a systematic way, but the results suggest that there are some formal policies of these districts that help to explain the behaviors and attitudes of the teachers.

Explained Variance

The five sets of explanatory variables in Table 4--teaching responsibility, student characteristics, parent characteristics, teacher characteristics, and professional climate--together account for between 5% and 19% of the variance in the four measures of teachers' parent-involvement behavior and nearly 25% of the variance in teachers' attitudes about parent involvement.

It is plausible that the explanatory variables actually account for a much higher proportion of variance than the empirical results show, because all of the dependent variables are measured with some imprecision. Three of the behavioral variables are each measured by a single questionnaire item, and two of these have quite asymmetrical distributions. Among the four teaching behaviors, the use of visits to students' homes is the one that is least well explained by the variable in the model. It has, however, the most unbalanced frequency distribution, with only 6% of the

respondents falling in the high response categories. On the whole, the statistically significant determinants of teacher parent-involvement behavior and attitudes are likely to be among the most important that could be identified in a survey design.

Summary and Discussion

Multiple regression procedures were used to study the effects of a range of possible influences on teachers' behavior and attitudes towards parent involvement in children's learning activities at home. Because measures used in the analysis derive from teachers' cross-sectional questionnaire responses, the estimates of influence cannot be exact. However, the multivariate procedures identify consistent patterns of effects across multiple measures, and extend the understanding of the probable influences on teacher behavior and attitudes that were depicted in the bivariate charts and tables. Grade level, discipline problems, racial composition, active parents at school, parental SES, teaching and educational experiences, and district policies are the variables that have particularly interesting independent effects on parent-involvement behaviors or attitudes.

Among all teaching responsibilities, the strongest independent effects are due to grade level, with teachers of younger students using more and different parent-involvement techniques than teachers of older students. This may be due to the nature of the tasks in the primary grades. Tasks that are simple and short may lend themselves to the time, energy and patience that parents can give at home. Teachers of older students emphasize independence in learning, and may find it more difficult to add a parent-involvement component to their programs without contradicting their emphasis on students' responsibility for their own work. It may be easier, also, to ask parents to help when children are just starting

school, when the hopes for success are high and histories of failure are short. Primary grade teachers often emphasize the importance of childrens' mastery of a narrow range of basic skills, so parents may have repeated experience in guiding clearly defined tasks.

Two noteworthy effects of student characteristics were found. First, the percent of students with disciplinary problems affects teachers' attitudes about parent involvement. The more discipline problems, the less positive teachers are about the likely success of parent involvement. This is intriguing because teachers report having more frequent contact with the parents of really difficult or disruptive students. These contacts may promote realistic attitudes about the likelihood of parent cooperation. Though teachers with disruptive students may continue to talk with parents and seek assistance, they may realize that there are limits to what they can expect from the parents.

Second, the racial composition of the student population has two relatively strong effects that illustrate the importance of studying different types of parent-involvement practices. With SES, other pupil characteristics and all other explanatory variables in the model, teachers in schools with more black students report using more techniques with parents at home than teachers in predominantly white schools. Teachers in schools with larger proportions of white students report more frequent parent assistants in the classroom. If more black students' mothers work outside the home, have larger families at home, or feel less comfortable in the school, they may be unable to assist in the classroom during the school day. Nevertheless, some teachers are still able to encourage these parents to attend to home learning activities.

This is important because other analyses of parent characteristics show that overall, teachers use more parent involvement techniques when

there are parents who are active in the daily life of the school. It may be that in predominantly black schools, teachers purposely compensate for the absence of a large core of active parents at school. Or, it may be that there are still enough active parents in these schools for teachers to feel comfortable in stressing parent-involvement techniques with all parents. It will be important in future research to determine whether (and how many) active parents at school are necessary for successful programs of home learning activities. Schools with different racial compositions may be particularly useful for future studies.

Parent characteristics do have a strong impact on the likelihood that teachers will emphasize parent involvement in their overall teaching strategy. Our data do not support the widespread belief that teachers are most able to accomplish parent involvement if their students have better-educated parents. Teachers with students whose parents are at all educational levels are about equally likely to be active users of any given parent-involvement technique. The differences related to parental socioeconomic status (SES) are found only among the non-users of a given technique. "Non-using" teachers whose students' parents have more education claim their lack of use of parent involvement techniques is due to the teacher's preference for alternative instructional methods. "Non-using" teachers whose students' parents have less education claim their lack of use is due to the parents' lack of ability to assist with learning activities.

The difference in attribution of parental ability to assist with home-learning activities appears only among the non-active users of parent involvement. This suggests that the common belief that less-educated parents cannot or will not assist in the instructional program is a consequence of teachers not having the methods of using parent involvement approaches. Regardless of parental educational level, active users have

overcome problems in designing parent-involvement programs, and no longer need to ascribe inabilities to less-educated parents.

In the examination of teacher characteristics, an important distinction is made between teaching experience and educational experience. The data show weak or no effects of teaching experience on parent involvement practices, but consistent, positive effects of advanced degrees and credits on several behavioral measures and on teachers' attitudes toward parent involvement.

There are few teacher-training courses that deal directly with parent involvement (Stallworth and Williams, 1980). It may be that advanced degree programs sensitize teachers to the theoretical issues about families and schools. Better-educated teachers may gain confidence to take charge of parent-involvement programs, to design workable techniques, and to share their knowledge with parents. Advanced training may provide more awareness of the different aspects of the teachers' role, and enable teachers to view themselves as managers of varied resources and support systems. Of course, the "causality" may be in a different direction if teachers who seek post-baccalaureate schooling are those who tend to try new techniques because both activities may improve their effectiveness as teachers.

Other teachers' and principals' influences on teachers' parent involvement practices and attitudes are not consistently important, but district policies significantly influence teachers' behaviors. Other researchers report district level differences on similar teacher behaviors. Rossi, Berk and Eidson (1974) report significant differences in teachers' home visits and contact with parents across a sample of urban school districts. In the current study, the strong coefficients ascribed to one or two districts

suggest that occasionally local policies about parent involvement are developed by the district and are adopted by many of the teachers. These policies may include recruitment of teachers with particular approaches, in-service training, or clearly expressed expectations and directives about parent involvement in homework activities.

The regression analyses reveal a constellation of small, independent effects that suggest that teachers use parent-involvement techniques when they need extra help. Urban schools, minority teachers, the percent of minority students, the percent of students with learning problems, Title I schools, and large classes or many classes are all variables that influence the use of more parent-involvement techniques or the use of workshops to teach parents how to help their children at home. When the school conditions are poor, when learning problems are severe, when many students need more help than the teacher has time to give, teachers may be more likely to seek help from parents, and to assist parents in workshops to provide the help they need.

Teachers' parent-involvement behaviors and teachers' attitudes about parent involvement are only modestly related. The weak relationship may be due, in part, to the preliminary nature of the measures of this exploratory survey, but there may be real differences in teachers' beliefs and their actual practices. Most teachers report that they need and desire parents' assistance and support in conducting educational and social activities for children. Many teachers also recognize the difficulty of implementing effective programs of parent involvement. They discuss the diversity of childrens' and parents' abilities, time and resources, school support, and their own time and talents. In addition, whereas teachers at all grade levels have generally positive attitudes about parent involvement, teachers of younger children more often implement

active parent-involvement programs. One future task is to clarify the content and conditions of successful programs at all grade levels so that teachers' attitudes can find better expression in their practice.

The large volume of evidence collected in this statewide survey of 3,700 teachers and their 600 principals suggests that strategies for accomplishing intensive at-home participation of parents in their children's learning activities have been mastered by a small proportion of practicing teachers. Somewhat unexpectedly, these teachers do not teach in schools in which their colleagues make extensive use of parent-based teaching strategies. Teachers active in involving parents in teaching activities at home, however, do report an unusually high level of participation in school activities by at least some of their students' parents.

Are the various practices used by teachers to get parents to work with their children at home effective uses of the teachers', parents' or students' time? Are the practices important for student learning? Can the practices accomplished by first grade teachers and by teachers with already active parents be adopted successfully by other teachers?

These questions cannot be addressed with the survey data from teachers. However, the statewide survey does provide new information about the degree to which teachers make use of strategies that include parents in the schooling process, and about the conditions of teaching that are related to the use of specific techniques. Future research needs to build on these data to determine the effectiveness of the varied practices of parent involvement and the most fruitful methods of spreading effective parent involvement teaching strategies to contexts where they do not naturally flourish.

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